

Oh my god, they were roommates by pterawaters

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Summary:

When Nancy and Steve hit a rough patch financially, the newlyweds had to rent out the extra bedroom in their condo. Steve's only condition was that they find someone quiet, and Jonathan fit the bill nicely. When the time comes to upgrade to a larger house, they find they can't picture a new home without Jonathan in it.

Oh my god, they were roommates

Author's Note:

This was written for day 2 of Stony Week, 2021! Specifically the "they were roommates" prompt. The title is Lacrymosa's fault 🎉

Not beta read, because poor time management on my part. Enjoy!

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Nancy looked at the household budget for the upcoming few months and sighed. Steve losing his job to the recession and being unable to find a new one had put a big dent in their savings. The only way they were going to be able to afford the mortgage on their condo was if they brought in a roommate, at least for a while. Shaking her head, she flipped to a new page of her legal pad and started drafting an ad for the following day's edition of the Indianapolis Star. She told Steve her plan over dinner (sandwiches of buttered white bread and cheap deli turkey, to save on costs).

"Who's going to want to share a two-bedroom apartment with a married couple?"

Nancy shrugged. "Someone as desperate as we are, I suppose."

With a frown, he swallowed the bit of food in his mouth and said, "Hand me the classifieds again. I'm going to widen my job search."

"Okay," she said, pulling the newspaper she'd brought home from work out from under her purse on the kitchen counter. "But I'm still putting the ad in. Even if you start working again tomorrow, we're going to need to cut costs for a good few months so we can get back to where we want to be. Remember the five year plan?"

Steve rolled his eyes, "Like I would ever forget. You have it taped

next to the bathroom mirror. One year from now, we were supposed to have enough for a down payment on an actual house.”

“And the year after that was when I wanted to start trying for a baby,” Nancy reminded him, loving the way his face always went a little soft at the mention of kids.

“I guess,” he said, still opening the paper to the classifieds and starting to skim through them. “Try to get someone quiet, though. When I shared a room during college, I could never hear myself think over all the noise.”

“They’ll be as quiet as a mouse,” Nancy promised. Reaching for her legal pad again, she started writing down questions for when she interviewed potential roommates. There had to be someone quiet out there, looking to rent a room.

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The first person to call Nancy about the room had possibly the quietest phone voice she’d ever heard. Thinking that this was exactly the sort of person Steve wanted her to find, she set up a meeting for that very afternoon. When Nancy got home from work, she called into the apartment, “Get dressed! A possible roommate is coming in a couple minutes!”

Steve stood from where he’d been sitting on the couch, already wearing a dress shirt and tie. “I got a job,” he said with a grin.

“You got a job?” Nancy squealed with delight, bouncing over to her husband and throwing her arms around him. “I’m so proud of you!”

“It’s just at a bank, but I’ll be training to be a loan officer, which will come with a better salary than I was getting at the office.”

Nancy was about to congratulate him again when there was a knock at the door. “Oh, that has to be him!”

Going to the door, Nancy opened it and found a young man standing there. He had a camera strap around his neck, a camera hanging from it, and a denim tote bag over one shoulder. “Jonathan?”

He nodded, meeting her eye for just a second before looking away. “That’s me. You’re Nancy?” He held out his hand and met her eyes again, just briefly.

Taking his hand, Nancy nodded. “That’s me. This is my husband, Steve.”

“Hey, how’s it going, man?” Steve said, joining them at the door and shaking Jonathan’s hand. “Come on in.”

They showed Jonathan around the condo, including the office that was going to be his room. “We’ll get everything out of here, of course,” Nancy assured him. “Taking on a roommate was kind of a recent decision.”

“Moving to the city was kind of a recent decision, too,” Jonathan replied.

Intrigued by this hint of who Jonathan might be, Nancy asked, “Oh? Where were you living before?”

“Just a nowhere place,” he said with a shrug that only intrigued Nancy further. “I applied to the job thinking I’d never get it. They want me to start on Monday.” Gesturing to the room, he said, “This’ll work. The ad said \$150 a month?”

Nancy nodded. “Plus a third of the utilities, which should come out to around 15 or 20 depending.”

“Can I use the kitchen?”

Sharing an amused look with Steve, Nancy told him, “Yes, of course. We barely use it, anyway.”

Jonathan frowned. “What do you eat?” Then he shook his head. “No, none of my business. Never mind. I’ll take it.”

“Great!” They went over a few more details before showing Jonathan to the door. After he left, Nancy turned to Steve and grinned. “Our five year plan is back on track!”

“He seems really quiet, at least,” Steve replied, frowning slightly as

he wrapped Nancy in his arms. “I feel like he’s gonna sneak up on me all the time.”

Laughing, Nancy assured him, “If it’s a problem, we’ll get him a bell. Like a cat.”

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When Nancy finally got home from work on a Wednesday three weeks later, she opened the door and was wafted with the most delicious smell she’d ever experienced. Setting down her things, she went to the kitchen, finding Jonathan stirring a pot with one hand and reading a book with the other. “That smells amazing!”

With a slight jump, Jonathan dropped his book. “Oh!”

“Sorry.” Nancy retrieved it from the floor and handed it back to him. “I didn’t mean to scare you.”

Setting down the spoon, Jonathan showed her the cover of the book. It said *The Exorcist*. “My brother’s making me read this before I he’ll talk to me again.”

Nancy laughed. “I can see why you were a little jumpy. I read it when I was sixteen and didn’t sleep for a week!”

“Normally they don’t get to me, but this one...” Jonathan shook his head and set the book down on the counter. He stirred whatever was in the pot again before saying, “There’s extra chili, if you want some.”

“Oh, my god. Really?” Nancy’s mouth watered.

“It’s kind of impossible to make a smaller batch.” Jonathan reached for the cabinet and took out a bowl, ladling some of the chili into it. He handed the bowl to Nancy before grabbing another one. “Besides, Steve already took me up on the offer. I honestly don’t know how you guys live on sandwiches and TV dinners.”

Shrugging, Nancy said, “My mom tried to teach me how to cook, but I don’t have the patience it requires. Besides, I’m trying to make senior journalist before we have kids. There’s no time for cooking.”

“I guess not.” Jonathan handed Nancy the second bowl of chili, then filled a third. Jonathan grabbed his book in one hand and his chili in the other before heading for his room.

Sitting at the perfectly good kitchen table, Nancy told him, “You don’t have to eat all by yourself. Join us, for dinner at least?”

He gave her a wide-eyed look, but ultimately nodded. “Yeah, okay. If you don’t mind.”

“I don’t,” Nancy said, thinking a nice conversation over dinner was the least she could do to thank him for cooking.

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Steve turned off the speaker-phone and disconnected the line, saying, “Well, shit. I guess we’re waiting another year.”

Nancy sighed, putting her arms around Steve’s middle and holding him close. “The market’s just not favorable right now. By the time we have a big enough down payment to afford the kind of house we want, I bet it’ll be a buyer’s market again.”

“Yeah, or prices will continue to skyrocket and we’ll never be able to afford a house here. We’ll have to move back to Hawkins.”

From the other side of the living room, Jonathan asked, “How short are you?”

“The bank says we need at least five thousand more,” Nancy told him. “So, I guess you don’t have to worry about finding a new place anytime soon.”

“I could...” he said, standing up and taking a few steps toward them, “...I don’t know, give you an advance on my rent.”

“Three years’ worth?” Nancy asked him. Jonathan had only been living with them for one and a half. “It’s not like—” Nancy stopped herself and met Steve’s eyes. “Well... We might make a better case to the loan officer if we tell him we’re planning to rent out one of the rooms. It might put our combined income over the threshold to get a better interest rate.”

“Yeah,” Steve said, “but it’s not like Jonathan is gonna live with us forever, right?”

“I can find my own place,” Jonathan offered.

“No!” Nancy went to Jonathan and grasped his hand. “If you move out, we’re gonna be stuck in this tiny condo for so much longer!”

Jonathan looked away and shrugged, but he had a tiny smile on his lips. “And, I mean, who would make sure you guys eat real food sometimes?”

Nancy turned to Steve and raised her eyebrows. “See?”

With a chuckle, Steve shook his head, then shrugged. “I guess, if it gets us the house...”

“So!” Nancy said with a grin, still holding onto Jonathan’s hand as she reached for Steve’s. “Jonathan will move with us. You know, if you’re putting up money for the down payment and paying some of the mortgage each month, you’d basically own a piece of the house. We could buy it from you in a year or two, when you’re ready to live on your own.”

“I’ll have the banker draw up the paperwork that way,” Steve said. “So it’s all in writing. I know Jonathan wouldn’t stiff us, but I want him to know he can totally sue us if we don’t pay him for his portion of the house.”

Jonathan laughed and lightly punched Steve in the arm with his free hand. “I know you wouldn’t do that.”

“Still better to have it in writing,” Steve insisted.

“Whatever. Let’s go look at houses!” Nancy grinned and went to go find the listings in the paper.

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“It’s a shame Jonathan’s not here to see this,” Nancy said, whistling at the sleek chef’s kitchen of the house they were touring. “He’s been saying he missed cooking on a gas range.”

“Electric’s cleaner,” Steve replied, but he ran a finger over the black marble countertop, awe obvious in the parting of his lips. “Are you sure we can afford this? Because I’ve been going over the numbers, and it’s...”

“It’s cutting it a little close,” she admitted with a sigh, leaning on the kitchen island — the kitchen was big enough to have an island! — and wondering if she should bring up the point that kept sticking in her throat each time they saw something like this in one of the houses. “But...”

Stepping closer, Steve put a gentle hand on her cheek and asked, “What?”

“It’s dumb,” she said, pulling his hand away from her face, but keeping it folded safely between her own. “You’re not gonna like the way it sounds.”

“Try me,” he insisted, squeezing her hand.

Licking her lips, Nancy looked around the kitchen once more, before whispering so the agent in the other room wouldn’t hear, “If we get this kitchen, maybe Jonathan will want to stay.”

“I mean, we’re planning on him staying for another year or tw—”

“I mean, *stay stay*,” she admitted, watching his face before she got too in her head about it and looked away. “I don’t want him to move out at all. Not now, not two years from now. Not ever.”

Steve sighed and pulled Nancy into a hug. She settled her ear against his chest and heard the way his heartbeat wobbled around a bit as he thought it through. “What about...? I mean, he’s gonna find a girlfriend eventually. She’s gonna want him to live with her at some point.”

“I’m going to tell you something.” Nancy pulled back long enough to look up and meet Steve’s eyes. They had that worried tilt to them, so Nancy pushed ahead before he could jump to any conclusions. “Jonathan told me in confidence, so you have to pretend you don’t know.”

“What is it? He’s not some spy from Russia or somewhere, is he?”

Nancy laughed. “No, nothing like that.” Keeping her voice low, she told Steve, “Sometimes the people Jonathan dates are men. He had a boyfriend for about a month last year, but he didn’t want to bring him over and cause a stir.”

“He— Wait, because of *me*? He thought I’d, what? Disapprove? Throw him out? I...” Nancy reached up and kissed away the confused pain on Steve’s face. “You know I’d never—”

“I know,” Nancy assured him quickly. “I’ve been telling him he doesn’t have to worry, but he still wouldn’t let me tell you.”

“You told me anyway.”

Nancy nodded.

Steve frowned, worrying at his lower lip with his teeth for a second. “What does that have to do with not wanting Jonathan to move out? So, maybe it’ll be a boyfriend who gets him to move out, instead of a girlfriend. What’s the point?”

“The point is...” Nancy sighed. She was just going to out and say this. “I want *us* to be his girlfriend and boyfriend.”

Nancy watched Steve’s face, getting ready for the part where he decided maybe they should break up, actually. Instead, he asked, “I’d be the boyfriend in this scenario, right?”

“Yes?” Nancy wasn’t sure where his head was if that was the question that came to mind. “Obviously, if that’s not something you want, we should—”

“I didn’t say that.”

The words hung in the air between them as Nancy studied her husband’s face, making sure he wasn’t playing some sort of joke on her. He looked as earnest as he had the day they’d stood at the front of her parents’ church and promised to be faithful to one another forever. Was he actually—

“So, what do we think of the space?” the real estate agent asked, coming back into the kitchen with a smile on his face. He gestured toward Nancy as he asked, “Does it make all your cooking dreams come true?”

“It’s beautiful,” Nancy agreed, side-stepping the question. She wasn’t sure how to explain to a relative stranger that she wasn’t the cook in this relationship, and neither was Steve. “I’m a little worried it’s on the upper end of our price range.”

“True,” said the agent, a compassionate expression on his face. “But you’ll want to think about the future, about getting a house that your family can grow into, you know? You don’t want to be stuck in a two-bedroom ranch when baby number three comes along, do you?”

Nancy tried to control her face at the mention of a baby “three.” She still hadn’t been sold on the idea of having more than one kid, much less three of them. The look on Steve’s face showed no such aversion. In fact, he looked a little excited at the prospect of a third hypothetical child. “I suppose not,” she told the agent. Taking Steve’s arm, she said, “Why don’t we take a look at the upstairs now?”

“I’ll be here if you have any questions.”

As they took the stairs, Nancy murmured to her husband, “If Jonathan were to stay, not just for another year or two, but forever, it’d be easier to afford a house like this.”

“That’s true.” Steve nodded toward the top of the stairs. “I wonder if the master bedroom of this place is big enough for three, like that house we saw on Cardinal Road.”

Nancy giggled, remembering that house (and its loudly 70s decor) vividly. “That bedroom was big enough for five!”

“I’m not gonna end up one of four husbands, am I?” Steve asked, wandering into the bedroom at the top of the stairs. “We’ll stop at just the one extra, right?”

“You mean...?” Nancy trailed off as she entered the master bedroom and looked around. It was staged with a big bed — king sized, she

was sure — facing a big picture window that looked out over the partially-wooded back yard. The skylight let the sun highlight the closet that took up all of the right wall. It had three sliding doors. Opposite from the closet was a wall with a vanity, a dresser, and an archway that had to lead to the master bathroom.

Her heart in her throat, Nancy passed Steve to go through that archway. Just inside, there was another walk-in closet, then a mirror and sink opposite a big jacuzzi tub. A doorway led to a bright space with a shower and a toilet, along with another mirror and sink. She could do her hair and make up at the outer one while Steve was still showering in here. She turned and got a better look at how big the tub was.

Steve came in and gestured to the tub. “Hey, I think I would actually fit in that one. Both of us would.”

“All three of us,” Nancy said without really meaning to. She covered her mouth and looked over at her husband. It seemed like he’d been edging toward saying yes to her crazy idea, but she knew she shouldn’t assume anything. Steve liked to joke about things that made him uncomfortable. That could be all it was.

Taking three slow strides, Steve approached Nancy. He caught her face in his hands and gently tilted up her face until he could kiss her, which he did. Nancy set her hands on Steve’s hips, looking up at him as he pulled back. He looked away, but kept his hands on her as he confessed, “If it was anyone other than Jonathan, I don’t think I’d... Well, I can’t see it happening.”

“But it *is* Jonathan.” Nancy reached up and turned Steve’s face so she could see his eyes. “What are you saying?”

“I’m saying I think I want to buy him this house.” He laughed, looking away again and letting go of Nancy to push his hands up into his hair. “I don’t even... But now that you said it... I mean, what if he...? Could we...?” He dropped his hands and sighed, looking up at the ceiling. “What if he doesn’t...?”

Gleaning what she could out of Steve’s string of incomplete questions, she replied, “We won’t know unless we ask.”

Steve nodded once, then left the room.

Confused, Nancy followed him. When they got to the bottom of the stairs, Steve asked the real estate agent, “Can we have another showing tomorrow evening? We have a friend we want to consult about some aspects of the house before we put an offer in.”

The agent nodded. “Yes, of course. Unless there’s some questions I can answer for you?”

Steve shook his head. “No, it’s a really specific set of questions only he’s gonna be able to answer.”

Nancy couldn’t help her surprised gasp. “Really?”

Steve smiled at her. “We won’t know unless we ask, right?”

“Right!” Nancy’s heart felt about a hundred sizes bigger than her chest and she threw her arms around her husband, hugging him tightly with gratitude.

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Nancy couldn’t help the nervous jiggling of her knee as they pulled up to the house for the second time in two days, this time with Jonathan in the passenger seat and Nancy sitting in back, because of her shorter legs. Jonathan looked through the windshield up at the house, saying, “Wow. It looks nice from the outside, at least.”

“Wait until you see the inside.” Steve parked the car and got out, stepping back to open Nancy’s door and give her a hand out, always the gentleman. The way his eyes were a touch wider than normal said he was nervous, but he also grinned at Nancy, excited too.

She could relate.

As they walked up to the front door, she told Jonathan, “We couldn’t put an offer down without making sure you like the house.”

“You should see the house I grew up in,” he said with a self-deprecating laugh. “This is a mansion in comparison.”

The front door opened, the agent greeting them with a smile. “Come on in!” He offered Jonathan his hand, saying, “Oscar Brooks, Brooks Real Estate. You must be the friend with all the answers.”

Jonathan shook it, introducing himself and giving Nancy a confused look.

She waved off his concern, taking his hand and saying, “Come on. We want to show you the kitchen first.”

After setting him loose on the kitchen, Nancy watched Jonathan walk around it in awe, touching appliance after appliance. Then she turned her attention to Steve, watching his fond expression as he watched Jonathan in turn. It made her heart warm with love and she went to him, holding his hand as they watched Jonathan.

He turned to them, saying, “This is too much! You guys are never going to use any of this after I move out.”

“I wouldn’t be so sure about that,” Steve said, letting go of Nancy’s hand and guiding Jonathan out of the kitchen. “Come on. There’s lots more to see.”

By the time they made their way into the master bedroom, Nancy was practically vibrating with nervous energy. She had no idea how this was going to go, and part of her wanted to hurry up and get it over with. The other part of her wanted to put it off as long as possible, so they could all stay like this forever, happy with possibility, without broken hearts.

While Jonathan toured around the master bedroom, then the bathroom, Steve gave Nancy a significant look. She sat down on the foot of the bed, afraid her legs weren’t going to hold her up through the conversation that was about to happen.

Coming back into the bedroom, Jonathan was saying, “Wow. I don’t think I’ve ever seen a tub that—” He stopped as Steve closed the door. “What’s going on?”

“We want to talk to you about something,” Steve said, leaving the doorway and sitting on the bed next to Nancy. She almost urged him

to go back and guard the door, so Jonathan couldn't get away, but then she realized that must have been why he'd moved; Jonathan would feel like he could leave if he needed to.

Steve was looking at Nancy, so she figured it was time to start the conversation. She took a deep breath and let it out, trying to be calm so she wouldn't screw this up. "This house is a little bit out of our price range," she admitted, urging Jonathan to sit in the chair opposite the bed, which he did. "So, we wanted to run an idea past you, see what you thought of it."

"Okay," he said, leaning forward and resting his elbows on his knees. "What's your idea?"

Nancy checked with Steve again, who nodded. Right. Okay. She could do this. "While we were looking at houses, and this one in particular, we realized that we don't want you to live with us for a year or two."

"Oh, that's okay," Jonathan said, sitting back in the chair. "I get it. You don't want me third-wheeling in your life anymore. A new house is a good time to—"

Nancy cut him off. "No, that's not what I meant, at all!" She gave a frustrated huff. "I meant, we want you to live with us all the time. Permanently!"

Jonathan's brows pinched together and he frowned, but he seemed more confused than offended or put off. "What do you mean, 'permanently'?"

Steve said, "We want to buy this house for you. Well, *with* you, 'cause it's kind of expensive."

"So, I'd... what? I'd live in your spare bedroom while you start your family? What if I meet someone and want a family of my own? I can't just stay here forever, you guys. It's not gonna work."

"Oh, for the love of..." Nancy muttered.

He just wasn't getting it, was he?

Sick of the confusion and needing it to end, Nancy did the only thing she could think of. She stood up and crossed the space between them. Taking Jonathan's face in her hands, she kissed him. When she pulled back, he looked even more confused than before, so Nancy told him, "We want you to live in *this* bedroom. With me and Steve. We love you."

"We're *in love* with you," Steve added from his place still sitting on the bed.

"You're...? I...?" Jonathan sat there, looking around the room like he was waiting for the people with the hidden cameras to jump out. Eventually he met Nancy's eyes and said, "But... you're *married*."

"So?" Nancy asked him. "We get to decide what our marriage looks like."

"Yeah." Steve came over to them, sitting on the arm of the chair. "We've decided we'd like you to be part of it. If that's what you want, too." He hesitantly put his hand on Jonathan's cheek, rubbing his cheekbone with his thumb. "What do you think?"

Jonathan closed his eyes and sighed. Nancy was sure they were about to be rejected, but then he put his hand over Steve's, holding it to his cheek. Opening his eyes again, Jonathan met Nancy's eyes, then Steve's. "This is a real offer? You're not, I don't know... Testing me or something? Am I dreaming?"

Steve chuckled and shook his head. Nancy stepped closer and put her hand over Jonathan's. "It's real. I understand if you think it'll be too weird or too complicated, but we had to ask."

Jonathan nodded and looked down again, pressing his lips together like he was thinking hard. Then he reached for Steve and asked, "Can I? I have to know."

"Know what?" Steve asked, but he smiled as Jonathan moved into his space and breathlessly said, "Yeah," with a nod.

Jonathan kissed him. Nancy had never seen her husband kiss anyone except his elderly grandmother, on the cheek. Watching him kiss

Jonathan was strange, but also exhilarating. Could they really have this all the time? Was it going to work? After a few seconds, she couldn't help but ask, "So? What do you think?"

When Steve pulled back, he and Jonathan were both smiling. Eyes still on Steve's face, Jonathan said, "Yeah." Then he turned and grasped Nancy's hand, pulling her closer.

"Yes?" she asked, looking to Steve and asking him, "Yes?" as well.

Steve nodded. "Yep. That works for me." He coughed and looked away, his cheeks stained bright pink.

Nancy chuckled, her heart full of love for him. Then, because she had to be sure, she asked, "Jonathan?"

He gestured Nancy back a step and stood up, holding onto Steve with one hand and Nancy with the other. He leaned in, kissing Nancy again, his lips more active than when she'd surprised him a minute before. When he broke away, he whispered, "Yeah. I'd like to give it a try, at least."

Nancy let out an excited squeal and threw her arms around him, hugging Jonathan tightly. Jonathan hugged her in return, and Steve wrapped his arms around both of them. After basking in the warmth of the hug for a few moments, Nancy asked, "Do you guys want to see if a bed this size is gonna be big enough for us to share?"

"I think that would get us in trouble with the real estate guy," Steve said, his voice with that low tone that told Nancy he was thinking explicit thoughts.

Jonathan must have recognized the tone, too, because he took a sharp breath, his fingers clutching at Nancy's back. Then he said, "We could always try out the bed you have at home."

Nancy shuddered, finding Jonathan's mouth again and kissing him. Knowing she was about two seconds from deciding to do something completely reckless, like try to take his clothes off right then and there, Nancy made herself step back. Then she remembered, "So, will you buy this house with us? Or should we keep looking?"

“No, this is it,” Jonathan said. “If we can buy this house, I think we’ll be all set.”

“I’m glad you like it,” Steve said. “When we saw the kitchen in particular, we thought of you.”

Jonathan grinned and kissed Steve again.

Eager to get somewhere more private, Nancy took one of Jonathan’s hands and one of Steve’s, tugging on them both. “Come on. Let’s tell Mr. Brooks we want to put in an offer. Then we can go back—” She didn’t want to say ‘home,’ because the condo wasn’t going to be that much longer. No, they’d build a home here, someplace big enough for the three of them to live their lives and grow old together. She smiled and said, “We can go back to the condo. Yeah?”

“Yeah,” Steve said, looking to Jonathan, who said, “Yes. Of course.”

Author’s Note:

Thanks for reading! I’d love to hear what you thought in the comments below!

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